

What is claimed is:

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1. An Internet-based sweepstakes system comprising:
- (a) a host computer system hosting a website; and
  - (b) a user computer system that can be connected to the host computer system and access the website;
  - (c) wherein the host computer system awards points to a user of the user computer system for accessing features of the website; and
  - (d) wherein the user is given a number of entries in a sweepstakes based on the number of points the user has been awarded.
2. The system of claim 1 wherein the user is automatically entered by the host system in the sweepstakes.
3. The system of claim 2 wherein the host computer system stores registration information pertaining to the user.
4. The system of claim 2 wherein the user receives one entry in the sweepstakes for each point.
5. The system of claim 2 wherein the user is awarded one or more points for clicking on a hyperlink in the website.
6. The system of claim 2 wherein the user is awarded one or more points for making a webpage in the website the user's home page.
7. The system of claim 2 wherein the user is awarded one or more points for signing up for a service offered by the host system.
8. The system of claim 7 wherein the service is email.
9. The system of claim 1 wherein the number of awarded points is displayed on the user computer system and the displayed number of points is updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points.

10. The system of claim 1 wherein the number of awarded points is displayed on the user computer system and the displayed number of points is automatically updated when additional points are awarded.
- 5 11. The system of claim 1 wherein the host computer system stores a table containing, for each website feature for which points are awarded, a number of points associated with the feature.
12. The system of claim 11 wherein the number of awarded points is displayed on the user computer system and the host computer system causes the displayed number of points to be updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points.
- 10 13. The system of claim 2 further comprising a database server storing a database; the database storing point information relating to the user.
- 15 14. The system of claim 13 wherein
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- (a) the host computer system stores a table containing, for each website feature for which points are awarded, a number of points associated with the feature;
- (b) the number of awarded points is displayed on the user computer system and the host computer system causes the displayed number of points to be updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points; and
- (c) the host computer system transmits the points awarded to the user to the database server.
- 25 15. The system of claim 14 wherein the points are transmitted to the database server asynchronously.
16. The system of claim 1 further comprising:
- a third-party computer system hosting a third-party website, wherein
- 30 (i) the user computer system can be connected to the third-party computer system and access the third-party website; and
- (ii) the host computer system awards points to the user for accessing features of the third-party website.
- 35 17. The system of claim 15 further comprising:
- a third-party computer system hosting a third-party website, wherein

- (i) the user computer system can be connected to the third-party computer system and access the third-party website; and
- (ii) the host computer system awards points to the user for accessing features of the third-party website.

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18. A method of entering a user of a user computer system in a sweepstakes comprising the steps of:

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- (a) connecting the user computer system to a host computer;
- (b) accessing a website on the host computer;
- (c) awarding points to the user for accessing features of the website; and
- (d) giving the user a number of entries in the sweepstakes based on the number of points the user has been awarded.

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19. The method of claim 18 further comprising the step of:

- (e) automatically entering the user in the sweepstakes.

20. The method of claim 19 further comprising the step of:

- (f) storing registration information pertaining to the user on the host computer.

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21. The method of claim 19 wherein the user receives one entry in the sweepstakes for each point.

22. The method of claim 19 wherein the user is awarded one or more points for clicking on a hyperlink in the website.

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23. The method of claim 19 wherein the user is awarded one or more points for making a webpage in the website the user's home page.

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24. The method of claim 19 wherein the user is awarded one or more points for signing up for a service offered by the host system.

25. The method of claim 19 wherein the service is email.

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26. The method of claim 18 further comprising the step of

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- (e) displaying the number of awarded points on the user computer system, wherein the displayed number of points is updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points.
- 5 27. The method of claim 18 further comprising the step of
- (e) displaying the number of awarded points on the user computer system, wherein the displayed number of points is automatically updated when additional points are awarded.
- 10 28. The method of claim 18 further comprising the step of
- (e) storing on the host computer system a table containing, for each website feature for which points are awarded, a number of points associated with the feature.
- 15 29. The method of claim 28 further comprising the step of
- (e) displaying the number of awarded points on the user computer system, wherein the displayed number of points is updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points.
- 20 30. The method of claim 19 further comprising the step of
- (f) storing a database on a database server, wherein the database stores point information relating to the user.
31. The method of claim 19 further comprising the steps of:
- 25 (g) storing a table on the host computer system containing, for each website feature for which points are awarded, a number of points associated with the feature;
- (h) displaying the number of awarded points on the user computer system, wherein the host computer system causes the displayed number of points to
- 30 be updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points; and
- (i) transmitting the points awarded to the user from the host computer system to the database server.
32. The method of claim 31 wherein the points are transmitted to the database server
- 35 asynchronously.

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33. The method of claim 18 further comprising the steps of:
- (e) connecting the user computer system to a third-party computer system;
  - (f) accessing a third-party website on the third-party computer system; and
  - (g) awarding points to the user for accessing features of the third-party website.
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34. The method of claim 32 further comprising the steps of:
- (j) connecting the user computer system to a third-party computer system;
  - (k) accessing a third-party website on the third-party computer system; and
  - (l) awarding points to the user for accessing features of the third-party website.
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35. Computer code embedded in a storage medium performing the steps of:
- (a) connecting a user computer system to a host computer;
  - (b) accessing a website on the host computer;
  - (c) awarding points to a user of the user computer for accessing features of the website; and
  - (d) giving the user a number of entries in a sweepstakes based on the number of points the user has been awarded.
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36. The computer code of claim 35 further performing the step of:
- (e) automatically entering the user in the sweepstakes.
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37. The computer code of claim 36 further performing the step of:
- (f) storing registration information pertaining to the user on the host computer.
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38. The computer code of claim 36 wherein the user receives one entry in the sweepstakes for each point.
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39. The computer code of claim 36 wherein the user is awarded one or more points for clicking on a hyperlink in the website.
40. The computer code of claim 36 wherein the user is awarded one or more points for making a webpage in the website the user's home page.
41. The computer code of claim 36 wherein the user is awarded one or more points for signing up for a service offered by the host system.
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42. The computer code of claim 41 wherein the service is email.
43. The computer code of claim 35 further performing the step of  
(e) displaying the number of awarded points on the user computer system,  
5 wherein the displayed number of points is updated substantially concurrently  
with an award of additional points.
44. The computer code of claim 35 further performing the step of  
(e) displaying the number of awarded points on the user computer system,  
10 wherein the displayed number of points is automatically updated when  
additional points are awarded.
45. The computer code of claim 35 further performing the step of  
(e) storing on the host computer system a table containing, for each website  
15 feature for which points are awarded, a number of points associated with the  
feature.
46. The computer code of claim 45 further performing the step of  
(e) displaying the number of awarded points on the user computer system,  
20 wherein the displayed number of points is updated substantially concurrently  
with an award of additional points.
47. The computer code of claim 36 further performing the step of  
(f) storing a database on a database server, wherein the database stores point  
25 information relating to the user.
48. The computer code of claim 36 further performing the steps of:  
(g) storing a table on the host computer system containing, for each website  
30 feature for which points are awarded, a number of points associated with the  
feature;  
(h) displaying the number of awarded points on the user computer system,  
wherein the host computer system causes the displayed number of points to  
be updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points; and  
(i) transmitting the points awarded to the user from the host computer system to  
35 the database server.

49. The computer code of claim 48 wherein the points are transmitted to the database server asynchronously.
50. The computer code of claim 35 further performing the steps of:
- 5 (e) connecting the user computer system to a third-party computer system;
- (f) accessing a third-party website on the third-party computer system; and
- (g) awarding points to the user for accessing features of the third-party website.
51. The computer code of claim 48 further performing the steps of:
- 10 (j) connecting the user computer system to a third-party computer system;
- (k) accessing a third-party website on the third-party computer system; and
- (l) awarding points to the user for accessing features of the third-party website.
52. A network-based sweepstakes system comprising:
- 15 (a) a host computer system hosting a service; and
- (b) a user computer system that can be connected to the host computer system and access features of the service;
- (c) wherein the host computer system awards points to a user of the user computer system for accessing features of the service; and
- 20 (d) wherein the user is given a number of entries in a sweepstakes based on the number of points the user has been awarded.
53. The system of claim 52 wherein the user is automatically entered by the host system in the sweepstakes.
- 25 54. The system of claim 53 wherein the host computer system stores registration information pertaining to the user.
55. The system of claim 52 wherein the number of awarded points is displayed on the user computer system and the displayed number of points is updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points.
- 30 56. The system of claim 52 wherein the host computer system stores a table containing, for each feature for which points are awarded, a number of points associated with the feature.
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57. The system of claim 53 further comprising a database server storing a database; the database storing point information relating to the user.
58. The system of claim 57 wherein
- 5 (a) the host computer system stores a table containing, for each feature for which points are awarded, a number of points associated with the feature;
- (b) the number of awarded points is displayed on the user computer system and the host computer system causes the displayed number of points to be updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points; and
- 10 (c) the host computer system transmits the points awarded to the user to the database server.
59. The system of claim 58 wherein the points are transmitted to the database server asynchronously.
- 15 60. The system of claim 52 further comprising:
- a third-party computer system hosting a third-party service, wherein
- (i) the user computer system can be connected to the third-party computer system and access the third-party service; and
- 20 (ii) the host computer system awards points to the user for accessing features of the third-party service.
61. A method of entering a user of a user computer system in a sweepstakes comprising the steps of:
- 25 (a) connecting the user computer system to a host computer;
- (b) accessing a service on the host computer;
- (c) awarding points to the user for accessing features of the service; and
- (d) giving the user a number of entries in the sweepstakes based on the number of points the user has been awarded.
- 30 62. The method of claim 61 further comprising the step of:
- (e) automatically entering the user in the sweepstakes.
63. The method of claim 62 further comprising the step of:
- 35 (f) storing registration information pertaining to the user on the host computer.



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64. The method of claim 61 further comprising the step of  
(e) displaying the number of awarded points on the user computer system, wherein the displayed number of points is updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points.
65. The method of claim 61 further comprising the step of  
(e) storing on the host computer system a table containing, for each website feature for which points are awarded, a number of points associated with the feature.
66. The method of claim 61 further comprising the step of  
(e) displaying the number of awarded points on the user computer system, wherein the displayed number of points is updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points.
67. The method of claim 62 further comprising the step of  
(f) storing a database on a database server, wherein the database stores point information relating to the user.
68. The method of claim 67 further comprising the steps of:  
(g) storing a table on the host computer system containing, for each feature for which points are awarded, a number of points associated with the feature;  
(h) displaying the number of awarded points on the user computer system, wherein the host computer system causes the displayed number of points to be updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points; and  
(i) transmitting the points awarded to the user from the host computer system to the database server.
69. The method of claim 68 wherein the points are transmitted to the database server asynchronously.
70. The method of claim 68 further comprising the steps of:  
(j) connecting the user computer system to a third-party computer system;  
(k) accessing a third-party service on the third-party computer system; and  
(l) awarding points to the user for accessing features of the third-party service.

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